

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee, held Wednesday, September 8, 2021 at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 68 Dudley-Oxford Road, Dudley, MA 01571, 7 PM.

In attendance were members of the School Committee:

Cathleen Carmignani
Jeanne R. Costello
Jordan Willow Evans attended via audio connection
Catherine M. Kabala
Kenneth J. Laferriere
Jamie L. Terry, Vice Chair
Pauline J. Aucoin, Chair

District Administration: Steven M. Lamarche, Superintendent of Schools, Richard J. Mathieu, Director of Finance and Operations, Brian J. Ackerman, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; principals: William F. Chaplin, Jennifer A. Desto, Jennifer Lilley, Peter J. Olson, Dean W. Packard, Christopher E. Starczewski, Kelly True; media representatives Rich Earle, audio visual coordinator, Sandra Sullivan, secretary.

I. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Moment of Silence

The chair called for a moment of peaceful reflection in memory of the 20th anniversary of the lives lost on 9/11/01.

The chair read rulings provided by District Counsel James Cosgrove regarding maintaining order at public meetings which stated the chair has no legal obligation to reply to any anonymous communication, nor to any communication of any kind unless sent by a legal authority with appropriate jurisdiction.

The chair read language from MGL C 30a Sec 20 G: "No person shall address a meeting of a public body without permission of the chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the chair, be silent. No person shall disrupt the proceedings of a meeting of a public body. If, after clear warning from the chair, a person continues to disrupt the proceedings, the chair may order the person to withdraw from the meeting and if the person does not withdraw, the chair may authorize a constable or other officer to remove the person from the meeting."

Mrs. Aucoin further quoted, "no person has any constitutional right to speak at any public meeting. The presiding officer... runs the meeting." The chair stated we will be strictly adhering to this language for all future meetings.

The chair noted the attendance of committee member Jordan Willow Evans will be by audio connection this evening, and all votes will be conducted via a roll call.

IV. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of Regular Meeting of Wednesday, August 25, 2021

A motion by C. Kabala, second by K. Laferriere to approve the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, August 25, 2021, as amended, was approved unanimously by roll call vote:

C. Carmignani - yes

J. Costello - yes

J. Evans – yes

- C. Kabala - yes
- K. Laferriere -yes
- J. Terry - yes
- P. Aucoin – yes

IV. Approval of the Warrant

The warrants continue to be signed electronically as well as in person. The warrants were distributed among the members without comment or questions.

| Accounts Payable | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Warrant # | Amount |
| 14 | \$17,371.94 |
| 15 | \$297,779.87 |
| 16 | \$613,756.74 |
| 17 | \$77,390.24 |
| 18 | \$180,662.83 |
| 19 | \$2,513.30 |
| Total | \$1,189,474.83 |

V. Citizens' Forum

The chair read Policy BEDH:

The chair read Policy BH:

The chair announced she will limit this agenda item to one half-hour, and allot each speaker three minutes to speak.

Timothy Paquette, Dudley, stated that school started last week as did the masking of our children. He spoke about the opening plan which outlined the need to wear masks despite a survey that indicated non-support of masks. He asked what is the plan to counter this mandate as the longer this goes on the less it will change. He begged the committee to find political courage to stand up for children, and they will be the true hero if they do.

Heather Williams, asked that her address no be used. She said if the vaccine and masks worked we should be seeing a decrease in case counts. She cited scientific reports that show masks are insufficient in preventing the spread.

David Smolski, Charlton, said people are uncomfortable speaking at Citizens Forum as they need to give out their address, and are dissatisfied with the responses to their questions. He cited the avenues for submitting questions to the committee:

1. School committee meetings – there should be some mechanism to capture the questions and to address them at the next meeting;
2. Email – He said he sent one in July, and received a response from Mrs. Terry and Mr. Laferriere. He asked how the other members know he received an answer. He suggested creating a way to let everyone know who is replying. Mr. Smolski said the public should engage with committee in a respectful way, and the public deserves to have our comments addressed. He cited Mr. Packard as one among those are eager to respond.

Mrs. Aucoin said the public is welcome to make an appointment with the superintendent at any time.

Kim Poirier, Charlton, referenced a letter that she said was emailed to all school committee members on August 31, 2021 citing all of the violations from the rules, policies, procedures and code of ethics from the district and state that have taken place by members of this committee. The committee was asked to respond to the communication with regards to member Jordan Evans.

Mrs. Aucoin interjected, and read a ruling provided by District Counsel James F. Cosgrove: the school committee has no authority to require the resignation of any of its members, each of whom were elected by the public in duly held elections per the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights.

Ms. Poirier asked if the committee would respond concerning emails that were directly about an individual member.

Mrs. Aucoin responded with District Counsel's ruling that the committee is not bound to respond to any communications, particularly anonymous communications.

Stefan Sage, Charlton, emailed the superintendent requesting the numbers of positive COVID-19 cases be addressed. Mr. Sage said he was directed to the district's COVID-19 Dashboard.

Marcia Wagner, Dudley, sought clarification about the committee's intent to receive and answer questions at each meeting. The chair cited district policy BEDH, which states that questions will be taken under advisement and answered at a future meeting.

VI. Communications

Mrs. Terry offered a response to Mr. Smolski indicating she has asked the policy subcommittee to review other policies that address the best ways of responding to emails.

VII. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Lamarche reported an incredible opening of the school year. There some smaller issues and Mr. Lamarche is working on a communication about road closures due to construction and resulting transportation issues. Mr. Lamarche said it was a fulfilling first day of school, and that he visited all schools on the opening days.

Mr. Lamarche and district administrators participated in several webinars and trainings this week. During a call with Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley, Mr. Lamarche learned about the proposed offramps for the Oct. 1 review of the mask mandate is an 80% vaccination rate.

The state has selected a vendor to provide district support for COVID-19 testing this year. CIC will provide onsite support and a testing coordinator for the Stay and Test program, for which parental consent is required.

Mr. Lamarche announced that the district's COVID-19 coordinator, Anne Marie DeMorris, has stepped down from her position. The district has hired Brittany Stolberg to serve in this capacity. Ms. Stolberg is an LPN, and will begin on September 20. Mr. Lamarche asked the community to support the work of the Covid-19 Coordinator going forward. Mr. Lamarche asked the committee to add Item F to the agenda this evening as it seeks to establish a position in response to student need.

IX. New Business

A. School Openings – Principals

Jennifer Desto and Jennifer Lilley thanked the hard-working custodians, secretaries, nurses, staff and families who contributed to a smooth opening of the schools. The primary schools are full with students as the preschool and kindergarten students started this week.

Kelly True and Peter Olson thanked the staff for their work to make it a great opening. Mr. Olson said Heritage School welcomed 435 students, 65 staff and one new principal.

Dean Packard and Christopher Starczewski opened the middle schools to their 21st year. Charlton Middle School has 630 students 87 staff, while Dudley Middle School has 548 students, and a new traffic pattern for parent transporting their children to and from school.

Mr. Chaplin said Shepherd Hill has been alive for three weeks of activities and sports. The school has less than 1,000 students this year. There is a new slogan: Shepherd Hill Strong Together. Parent drop off has quadrupled. The Freshman Class will hold its first barbecue on Friday.

B. Update, Curriculum Subcommittee for Teaching and Learning – Cathleen Carmignani

Mrs. Carmignani reported on the subcommittee's last meeting, which was in August. The Subcommittee is comprised of Mrs. Carmignani, Mrs. Terry, and Ms. Costello. Discussions will continue about the implementation of the new literacy curriculum, CKLA, and professional development offerings to teachers. Mrs. Carmignani said the subcommittee will begin to formalize a process of updating curriculum with the Policy Subcommittee, and will provide the committee with reports on the math and science curriculum at the middle schools.

C. Update Teaching and Learning - Dr. Ackerman

1. Professional Development

Dr. Ackerman thanked all of the teachers who this past summer led the Ramp Up Programs at Charlton Elementary School and Heritage School. The district was fortunate to find sufficient staff to support over 100 elementary students.

Dr. Ackerman reported the district has received a continuation grant of \$111,922 to support the Early Grades Literacy program.

District elementary staff who did not participate in the summer professional development opportunity were scheduled for Session 2 held August 24 and 25.

Middle and secondary educators began the year with professional development on social-emotional Learning facilitated by district School Adjustment Counselors Sarah Coddington, Darin Haig, Courtney Galicia, Perri Pfrommer, and Jennifer McGrail.

2. ASOST – Summer Programming

Dr. Ackerman said the previous two years were a disruption of the school routine. To close the gaps, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education created a grant program for districts to provide summer and after school programs. The district's successful application resulted in \$70,000 to offer After School and Out of School Time (ASOST) programming in the spring of 2021. The Ramp-Up program assisted students in grades 1-4 with additional math and ELA instruction in a fun, welcoming and summer camp-like environment. Transportation was provided to and from the programs held at Charlton Elementary School and Heritage School.

Dr. Ackerman said the materials purchased with grant funds to address learning gaps in math and reading can be used during the year.

D. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) – Principals

Mr. Lamarche said this item was on the August 25 meeting agenda, and was included in the 2021-2022 School Year Reopening Plan.

Mr. Chaplin spoke about the efforts among staff to maintaining consistent relationships. Last year during hybrid and remote learning options, the team was relentless in maintaining communication with all students.

Mr. Chaplin said before the pandemic, Shepherd Hill organized Wellness Weeks for everyone. This was continued last year. Staff were asked to recognize students' patterns, and he said students were great about letting staff know when they needed help. Virtual presentations and competitions were part of this program.

Mr. Packard said SEL is about the staff as well as students. The middle school goal is to help students make healthy choices, and agreed it is all about maintaining connections and relationships. Mr. Packard said there are active support groups in the school.

Mr. Starczewski said the clinical team is the thread that sews this together. Staff uses questionnaires and data to looking for trends, and to diagnose and identify specific areas of concern through a variety of tools.

Administrators noted the former in-school suspension room is now the Reset Room. Instilling the traits of courage, gratitude, forgiveness, and compassion in action is made through the district's health program.

The middle schools were one of the early adopters of adding adjustment counselors at the middle schools last year. These positions were grant funded.

At the elementary level, there is a continuum of services while classroom teachers remain the consistent presence in a student's life. At Dudley Elementary School and Heritage School, a survey has been created and is administered three times a year. Mr. Olson and Ms. True say the Morning Meetings is a way for students to get to know one another.

Mrs. Desto and Mrs. Lilley say critical connections begin in a student's home. In school, there are tiered support and a character education program.

E. Report of the Director of Finance and Operations - Director Mathieu

1. Update disposal of Surplus Property – this was on the last agenda. The committee had no further questions.
2. Update Champions - Before and After School Program – Mr. Mathieu said as of last week, the program was moving forward with necessary licensing. Families have been alerted the program will start later than anticipated. Enrollment is increasing.
3. Heritage School – Mr. Mathieu said complications with the water at Heritage School began before the opening of school, but that the team pulled everything together to make sure all things were done correctly and water flowed on day 1 of school. Mr. Lamarche thanked Mr. Mathieu for his work on this. A permanent connection is on order.

F. Request to Consider Establishing New Position – 1:1 ABA Paraprofessional

A new student has moved into the district, with an IEP requirement for the support of an ABA paraprofessional. Mr. Lamarche requested the committee's approval to establish and post this position, which will be funded through the Special Education Circuit Breaker.

A motion by C. Kabala, second by J. Costello to approve the position of a 1:1 ABA Paraprofessional to support a student on an IEP, and this was approved unanimously by roll call vote.

C. Carmignani - yes

J. Costello - yes

J. Evans – yes

C. Kabala - yes

K. Laferriere -yes

J. Terry - yes

P. Aucoin – yes

The chair noted this is the last meeting for Secretary Sandra Sullivan, who is retiring effective October 15, 2021. The School Committee commended Mrs. Sullivan for her 25 years of service to the district, and presented her with a commemorative chair.

X. Next Meeting Dates

School Committee Meeting: Wednesday, September 22, 2021, 7:00 PM Charlton Middle School, 2 Oxford Road, Charlton,

Budget and Finance Subcommittee: TBD - Video Conference

Policy Review Subcommittee: Thursday, September 16, 2021, 9:00 AM - Video Conference
Curriculum Subcommittee for Teaching and Learning: TBD - Video Conference
Capital Outlay/Safety Subcommittee: Friday, September 17, 2021, 11:00 AM - Video Conference

- XI. Future Agenda Items:** Massachusetts DESE Mask Mandate (September 22), DCRSD Strategic Plan Progress Report (October), School Improvement Plans (November), School Committee workshop (TBD), Superintendents’ Evaluation and Goals (October), End of Year Audit (October), Requests for overnight travel (Ongoing), and an Executive Session to enter into contract negotiations with the superintendent
- XII. Executive Session:** To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining [**Dudley-Charlton Teachers’ Association**] if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares, and to reenter open session for a vote, or votes if necessary, and to adjourn.

This motion by made by K. Laferriere, second by C. Kabala, and approved unanimously by roll call vote at 8:58 PM.

- C. Carmignani - yes
- J. Costello - yes
- J. Evans – yes
- C. Kabala - yes
- K. Laferriere -yes
- J. Terry - yes
- P. Aucoin - yes

The committee returned to open session at 9:16 PM.

XIII. Adjourn

A motion by C. Carmignani, second by J. Terry to adjourn the meeting was approved unanimously by roll call vote at 9:16 PM.

- C. Carmignani - yes
- J. Costello - yes
- J. Evans – yes
- C. Kabala - yes
- K. Laferriere -yes
- J. Terry - yes
- P. Aucoin - yes

Items used for this meeting include:

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|--|------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Agenda: 9/8/21 | Minutes: 8/25/21 | Superintendent’s Report: 9/8/21 | Director of Finance and Operations Report: 9/2/21 |
| Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Reports: Summer Programming; Teaching and Learning | | | |

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Sullivan, Secretary